

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (currently amended) A mounting bracket for securing a plank to a joist, said mounting bracket comprising: a continuous piece of structural material of a predetermined length wherein the cross-section of said mounting bracket is curved or angled, said mounting bracket further comprising:

a planar, solid separating flange portion;

a joist-fastening flange portion connected to said separating flange portion, which is approximately perpendicular to said separating flange portion, said joist-fastening flange portion having a hole therein for receiving a fastener for fastening said mounting bracket to the joist;

a support flange portion connected to said joist-fastening flange portion, said support flange portion having an access hole therein wherein said access hole is aligned with said joist fastening hole; and

a planar plank-fastening flange portion having a free edge wherein said planar plank-fastening flange portion is connected to said support flange portion, said planar plank-fastening flange portion having a hole therein for receiving a fastener for fastening said mounting bracket to the plank and wherein said separating flange portion, said joist fastening flange portion, said support flange portion and said plank-fastening flange portion transition uninterrupted one into another to form said mounting bracket with the proviso that the free edge of the planar plank-fastening flange portion is without teeth.

2. (canceled)

3. (previously presented) The mounting bracket of claim 1, wherein said joist-fastening flange portion extends from said separating flange portion at an angle of approximately 90°.

4. (cancelled)

5. (cancelled)

6. (previously presented) The mounting bracket of claim 1 wherein said separating flange portion and said plank-fastening flange portion are substantially co-planar.

7. (previously presented) The mounting bracket of claim 1 wherein said support flange portion extends from said joist-fastening flange portion at an angle of approximately 35 degrees.

8. (currently amended) A mounting bracket assembly for mounting a plank to a joist, comprising:

a planar, solid separating flange portion for placement between the plank and the joist; a joist-securing flange portion adjacent said separating flange portion, wherein said joist-securing flange portion is capable of being secured to the joist; a support flange portion adjacent said joist-securing flange portion, said support flange portion having an access hole therein wherein said access hole is aligned with a joist fastening hole; and, a planar plank-securing flange portion having a free edge wherein said planar plank-securing flange portion is supported by said support flange portion, wherein said plank-securing flange portion is capable of being secured to the plank with the proviso that the free edge of the planar plank securing flange is without teeth.

9. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 8 further comprising a fastener for securing said joist-securing flange portion to said joist.

10. (original) The assembly of claim 9 wherein said securing means is selected from the group consisting of a screw, a nail or a bolt.

11. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 8 further comprising a fastener for securing said plank-securing flange portion to said plank.

12. (original) The assembly of claim 11 wherein said securing means is selected from the group consisting of a screw, a nail or a bolt.
13. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 8 further comprising a spacer portion between said plank-securing flange portion and said support flange portion.
14. (original) The assembly of claim 13 wherein said spacer portion is curved.
15. (canceled)
16. (canceled)
17. (canceled)
18. (previously presented) The mounting bracket of claim 1, wherein one or more weep holes are provided.
19. (canceled)
20. (previously presented) The mounting bracket of claim 1, wherein said mounting bracket is affixed to the side surface of said joist and the bottom surface of said plank.
21. (currently amended) The mounting bracket of claim 1 wherein said structural material is selected from the group consisting of steel, aluminum, and plastic ~~or any other structural material~~.
22. (canceled)
23. (new) The mounting bracket of claim 18 wherein one or more weep holes are incorporated into the lower end of said mounting bracket.